

VZCZCXRO3056
RR RUEHPA
DE RUEHNM #0928/01 3231804
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 191804Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5471
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1699
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 1405
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NIAMEY 000928

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W DENNISON
PARIS FOR AF WATCHER
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/19/2019
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [NG](#)
SUBJECT: NIGER: ECOWAS MEDIATOR MEETS WITH DIPLOMATIC CORPS
ON THE NIGERIEN POLITICAL CRISIS

Classified By: Ambassador Bernadette M. Allen, Reason 1.4 d

¶1. (C) Summary. On November 20 (today), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Mediator Abdulsalami Abubakar invited the diplomatic corps to a morning meeting to discuss the current political crisis in Niger. He stated that the purpose of his delegation's four-day visit to Niamey is to meet with Government of Niger (GON) officials, Opposition members, civil society groups, elders and other stakeholders, in an effort to extract Niger from its difficult situation. He added that he seeks advice from donor partners resident in Niger on how to encourage dialogue to prevent conflict. (Note: Curiously, diplomats resident in Niger from ECOWAS' nations were not present in the meeting; reportedly a separate meeting was held with them. I (Amb. Allen) intend to reach out to my ECOWAS counterparts for a read out of their meeting.) End summary.

¶2. (SBU) ECOWAS Mediator Abubakar opened the meeting with an apology for the short notice to the diplomatic corps. He stated the purpose of his delegation's four-day visit to Niger, then asked for the diplomatic corps' assessment of the political situation in Niger. The dean of the diplomatic corps (Algeria) thanked the Mediator for inviting the diplomatic corps to the meeting. He added that the recent end of conflict in northern Niger had been a good sign for peace and stability. He noted concern that the volatile political environment could have detrimental effects in the subregion which already is plagued with terrorism, drug trafficking and banditry. I suggested that before the resident diplomatic corps offer views on the political situation that the Mediator provide an overview of the current state of affairs.

¶3. (C) Abubakar responded that he and delegation met with a GON delegation and opposition parties in Abuja. He stated that the GON delegation insisted that President Tandja had not violated the Nigerien constitution and that the August 4 referendum was the only option that would permit the President "to continue his good work." He said the GON delegation cited numerous articles in the 1999 constitution to support President Tandja's actions and insisted there was no turning back to the Fifth Republic. The Mediator stated that the Opposition spoke of the dissolution of GON institutions and added that President Tandja had totally violated the Constitution. They complained about being harassed and intimidated, consequently insisted there would be no negotiation in Niger. Abubakar said the GON denies having harassed or intimidated opposition members. He expects to meet again with both sides later today (November 19). He asked how his delegation might go about trying get both sides to sit together for negotiation and what possible

compromises could be offered to maintain the peace. He stated that the donor partners' governments' have influence on both the GON and Opposition, and inquired what "carrots and sticks" might be used to sway both sides.

¶4. (SBU) Ambassador (European Commission) spoke about Article 96 of the Cotonou Accords as a vehicle to promote dialogue. He said the process has already been launched and that the first meeting with the European Union is scheduled to occur in Brussels in December. He opined that any success at getting the GON and Opposition in a dialogue would be viewed as progress leading up to the Brussels meeting. Ambassador (China) emphasized his government wants peace and stability preserved in Niger so that "the social progress that has been made won't be disrupted." He added that each country has its own social, political and economic realities and stressed that his government doesn't interfere in the domestic affairs of other states. Ambassadors (France) and (Spain, in her capacity as the European Union Chair in Niger) spoke on the Cotonou Accords and the importance of good governance and stability to promote development. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Resident Representative chimed in with concerns about food security across the region, notably in Niger. She emphasized that a lack of good governance and stability would make it difficult to effectively implement food security programs.

¶5. (C) I suggested that the Mediator stress to both sides that their inability to begin dialogue and arrive at a resolution to the political crisis makes it extremely difficult for partners to implement programs designed to improve the quality of life of Nigeriens. I stressed that

NIAMEY 00000928 002 OF 002

some partners are bound by legal requirements, consequently program suspensions and sanctions would take effect, to the detriment of Nigeriens. I asked the Mediator to reemphasize to both sides that they need to take into account the good of the Nation, as opposed to self-interests, to make an effort to meet in the middle. For example, in light of the Opposition objection to the President's three-year extension, perhaps both sides could reach agreement on conducting a "free and fair" Presidential election in the near term (perhaps a few months to a year) that permits the incumbent to run for re-election. Given President Tandja and his supporters' strong belief that the President is popular, why not have him challenge the Opposition to deliver a candidate to contest against him.

¶6. (SBU) Foreign Assistance Coordinator (Iran) remarked that Niger placed last on the United Nations Human Development Index. He said development in Niger must be the number one priority to eradicate poverty. He opined that sanctions do not accomplish anything, that they only harm persons at the grassroots level.

¶7. (U) Recognizing there were no additional comments from the diplomatic corps, the Mediator reiterated his thanks to all who responded to his invitation on such short notice and closed the meeting. He indicated that, time permitting, he may wish to meet individually with some members of the diplomatic corps.

ALLEN